

GUESTS FOR THE ROYAL FEAST

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A SERMON
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“Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.”
Matthew 22:8-10

IN the previous verses of this striking parable we see that the Great King had been ungraciously treated by his subjects, and had in his wrath swept the rebels away, but there was the feast still waiting for guests, and the time had arrived to celebrate the nuptials of his son. The terror of the royal power had been proven, but it still remained to display the splendor of the imperial hospitality. Therefore, while yet the clash of arms is in our ears, we hear the voice of royal clemency. The din of war and the tramp of warriors have not caused the wedding or its feast to be forgotten, neither has wrath obliterated mercy.

We read that “he sent forth his armies, and slew those murderers, and burned up their city,” but in the next line we find the record, “then saith he to his servants, go ye into the highways, and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage.” In wrath he remembers mercy. On the heels of his men at arms he dispatches the ambassadors of peace. His power went forth to destroy his enemies, but it went also with his messengers to ingather the needy from the streets. Judgment is the Lord’s strange work, but He delighteth in mercy. Once He smites, but not till He has thrice bidden the rebels come to him, and when at last He overthrows the incorrigible, He takes occasion from it to extend His bounty to many others. Truly God is love.

In the present portion of the parable, we are allowed to behold the king engaged with his servants in—

I. A CONTEMPLATION OF THE REFUSAL given to his bounty.

The royal host appears, as it were, to be in consultation with his servants. What a conception! The Eternal Father considers the position of affairs occasioned by the infamous conduct of those who rejected the Gospel of His Son! It is clearly no small matter to Him. The glory of the Only Begotten lies near His heart. He is set forth as a king surveying the preparations made, and considering the lack of guests. “The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.” The divine mind is pictured after the manner of men, as greatly moved and agitated with the dilemma before it. There could be no banquet without guests, and yet guests there were none, and in such a case there would be waste, disappointment, dishonor, and the lack of that joyous element so befitting the celebration of a marriage.

In vain the fatted kine, the choice flour, the wine, and the oil, if none came to partake thereof. For want of a better word, we described the condition as one of embarrassment to the host, and so indeed it would have been had not the host been God Himself, of whose understanding there is no searching. Nothing is dark to Him, but from the human point of view it did seem to be a dilemma indeed when Jesus came to His own, and His own received Him not, when the hands of mercy were stretched out in vain all the day long, to a disobedient and gainsaying generation.

Perhaps you may yourself have been at much cost to prepare a feast, have exercised much thought to please your company, and have counted upon the fellowship of the entertainment, and then through some untoward circumstances no one has come at the expected time, it was a great trouble to you, and damped your joy. Had it been a marriage it would have been far worse.

Now it was not possible in this parable to teach the doctrine of foreknowledge and omniscience, or else the figure would have broken down. No one metaphor can teach all truth, or all the sides of truth, we have here the human aspect of the matter, and should carefully note it. The parable is meant to let us see what the thoughts of God are, when He sees sinners refuse to come to Him and partake in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

With wonder behold the divine mind as it contemplates the scene. All things are ready, there is nothing more for God to do in the work of our salvation, in order to honor the Lord Jesus Christ nothing remains but that men believe on Him and receive His grace. The Lord has fulfilled His promises, His Son has been incarnate, the active life of holiness Christ has lived, the passive obedience to the law Christ has rendered. If the soul needs spiritual meat, Christ is that meat; if the soul wants spiritual drink, Christ is that drink, and of both meat and drink there is good store in Him. If men, before they can come and honor Christ at the marriage feast, want washing, there is a fountain filled with blood. If they require clothing, there is a robe of matchless righteousness. If they desire adornment, there are jewels of great price. "All things are ready," nothing is wanting, nothing but hearts to receive the blessing.

As the case stood in the parable, *a certain number of men had been bidden*. It seems to be the theory of some theologians, that none ought to have been bidden but those who were sure to come. They hold, as we rejoice to hold, that there is an election of grace. In holding the doctrines of grace with a firm grasp they do well, but they err when they teach that the invitation is to be restricted to the chosen, for here it is as clear as daylight, that the first invitation was given to those who never were in the election of grace at all.

They which were bidden proved to be "not worthy," and yet they were bidden, over and over again, honestly and in good faith. The king said they were bidden, and this means that God Himself willed that the rejectors of His grace should be invited. His servants did not do wrong in bidding them, for the king bade them do so. It has been said, "It is useless to bid sinners come to Christ who are dead and will not come." It is useless as far as you can see—useless as to the bringing of them in, but we do not know all God's ends and designs, and some things, in which we see no use, may nevertheless be needful to His purpose.

We imagine that flowers "waste their sweetness on the desert air," but there is no wastefulness in the Great Householder's arrangements, and the divine economy will one day be justified. There are parts of God's plan in which we see the evident utility, and it remains for our faith to believe that all the rest will turn out to be equally fraught with wisdom. The preacher of the Gospel is "a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one he is a savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life," but a sweet savor still.

We are to preach the Gospel to sinners still, and to bid them come—bid them come even though they will not come. We are to continue to invite those who go their way to their farm and to their merchandise, nor must we fail to call even those who despitefully use us. Far wider than the acceptance is the invitation, for "many are called, but few are chosen." The divine arrangement foreknew it would be so.

All things are ready, then, and men are bidden, but it is said that *they were not worthy*. What is meant by that? Surely the Gospel is not a matter of worthiness, for "in due time Christ died for the ungodly," and He has "come to seek and to save that which was lost." So far as any worthiness of personal righteousness is concerned, there certainly is no worthiness in any son of Adam, and the expression must not so be understood.

We want no worthiness of merit in order to come to the Gospel feast, but this is a mode of expression used to denote the fitness of things. It was not fit that men who preferred their paltry possessions to the king's favor, and were traitors at heart, should unite in the festivities of the princely marriage. They thought themselves too good, and this was their unworthiness. They were too proud, too self-sufficient, too high-minded to be worthy recipients of bounty and favor. He is the worthy receiver under the Gospel, who comes feeling his unworthiness, and accepts the Gospel provision as a gift of

grace, but he who will not come because he thinks the Gospel unworthy of him, shows himself to be unworthy of it.

When we determine to forgive an offender, we do not count him unworthy to be restored to our favor until he denies his fault, and in defiance of our love insults us again and again, then even mercy feels, that he must be left to himself. He who continues to reject the pardon which the Gospel proclaims, and hardens his neck after many reproofs, dying as he now is, will have proved his utter unworthiness of grace. If a royal alms were to be given away to the poor, without regard to their character, if a poor person came and gratefully received it, his previous life would not disqualify him, but if another should mock at the almoners and ridicule the gift, he would prove that he was not worthy. Not his poverty, but his proud behavior would disqualify him.

Dear friend, are you willing to be saved in God's way, through faith in Christ Jesus? then rest assured you have all the worthiness that is needed. Stand not back, therefore, because you are sinful. Say not, "I am unworthy" because you have no good works, for self-righteousness would not prove you to be a fit object for grace, but the reverse, since grace is for sinners, for the undeserving and lost.

See you, then, in what position the royal host was placed? There was the good cheer for the wedding, the dainties were not only at hand, but actually ready. The oxen were not fattening in the stalls, but already killed, cooked, and ready for serving. In the East the heat is such that animal food must be eaten at once, and in this case it was already upon the table. More than this, the wedding was ready, the appointed day had dawned. What was to be done? There was one alternative, and that was to annul the wedding and let the matter drop. This neither the king nor his son could think of.

An invitation had been sent, and those who were bidden would not come, wrath in hot haste might have said, "Close the door for ever," but no, God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, neither are His ways as our ways. The Lord might have said when the Gospel was rejected by the Jews, "These are like unto others of the sons of men, they are all reprobate, I will not have mercy upon them, but will ease Me of Mine adversaries."

When Jesus came to His own and met so unhandsome a reception He might have said, "I will return to my place whence I came out, if I come here to die for men, and men yield Me no better reception in My infancy than a manger, if they give Me no better occupation than a carpenter, if they call Me by no better name than that of a Galilean, if they afford Me no better entertainment than to be homeless, without a place to lay My head, then will I get Me back, and let them see what will come of it. Let the covenant be annulled, let the Gospel be revoked, let mercy end, and let the ungrateful race go down to eternal misery."

But JEHOVAH is God and changes not, and therefore we are not consumed. It was not in the heart of the king to go back from his purpose or cease from his bounty. His son's wedding must go on, the feast must be eaten, and the banquet must be such as to display his magnificence. To honor his son was the motive which swayed the king in the parable, and such a master motive reigns in the heart of God. "No," saith the king, "the wedding shall be furnished with guests, there shall be no disappointment for my son on this happy day. I will yet make my kingdom ring with the fame of his marriage festival.

Behold, the plan which had kept back, but which this day I reveal to my servants. My first invitation, as I knew of old, has revealed the insincerity and treachery of those who were bidden, I now unveil another method, which shall assuredly display my grace and sovereign favour. I will bring in whomsoever I will to eat bread at this wedding. I will take the base things of the earth to confound the mighty, and things that are not to bring to nought things that are."

Now, observe this, you who have heard the Gospel long, but have rejected it, God will not therefore recall the Gospel or disannul His covenant of love, or call back the provisions of His grace, because not for your sake, but for His Son's sake and for His own honor's sake, He has resolved to go through with this matter, Jesus shall not be incarnate in vain, the oxen and the fatlings of the covenant shall not be slain for nothing, good shall conquer evil, mercy shall rejoice over judgment, Jesus shall see of the

travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. The Redeemer's union with His church shall not be unattended by those rich displays of grace which shall make it the wonder of all the ages.

Though *those who were first bidden refused*, though they thought to dishonor the Lord by so doing, *His purpose shall stand*, and His chosen shall be saved. Has the Lord been foiled yet in anything that He has attempted? Who has ever restrained the everlasting One? or who has said unto Him, "what doest thou?" Did chaos by its wild confusion prevent the ordering of the world? Did not the Spirit move upon the waters, and bring forth life and order there? When darkness was on the face of the deep, could that resist Him? Did not the words "light be" scatter the darkness at once? And it shall be so now, in the world of mind as well as in the world of matter, for JEHOVAH is Lord of spirits and doeth as He wills among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of this lower world.

Though some think not so, yet full surely is it a sort of atheism to deny the almightiness of God in the realm of mind. In both He rules supremely without violating the nature of either, except it be for His glory to work unusual miracles. Many cannot understand how this can be, unless we reduce mind to the bondage of matter, and conceive of men as machines, destitute of free agency, but in this they lose the glory of the truth. The omnipotence of God is glorified in the fact that while man has a will, yet God governs him as a free agent, He does not violate the will, and yet knows how, by spiritual forces, to work His own purposes, so that men do as *He* wills.

That God rules men as a builder rules his stones and timber, is the idea of idiots, but that He leaves them men, in full possession of their freedom, and yet achieves the purposes of His grace, is the truth. He has mysterious cords of love, and bands of a man with which to draw men, they are compelled to come in, but yet "the people willingly offer themselves." It is a paradox, and so is every truth, if we are willing to see it all. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it, and therefore, I accept it as all the more clearly in harmony with the attributes of Him whose ways are past finding out.

You see, then, that God's great determination is to go on with His Gospel festival. He condescendingly seems *to His servants* to turn it over in His mind, but it had all been in His plan from old eternity, and He now unveils it. The words of the parable lay bare to spiritual minds the mysteries of God's dealings with Israel and the Gentiles, and bring us down to the period when the great Gospel mystery, which had been hid from kings and prophets, was brought to light, and the nations were made to see the salvation of God in Christ Jesus His Son.

Let us pass on to another consideration, and observe—

II. THE COMMISSION ENLARGED.

"They that were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore" (for that very reason) "into the highways, and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage."

It was a disappointment to the servants that the often invited guests would not come, but they were to have an abundant recompense in seeing a far more grateful company assembled, and *a far more remarkable assembly than could have gathered at the palace had the bidden ones come at their call*. To the servants it must have appeared little short of a catastrophe that guests should be lacking. No feast, especially a royal one, would be complete without willing guests, to force men by violence would not answer the purpose, they must be cheerful, joyful, delighted feasters, or they would turn the wedding into slavery. The problem was how to get these willing and joyful guests, where could they be found?

The king knew well where they were, and pointed out the method of wisdom when he said, "Go out into the highways where the poor are wandering and where the hungry faint by the way; go out where the many are and bid them come and feast to the full; as many as ye find bid to the marriage." Ah, how did these vagrants of the highways, those tramps, those hawkers, and tinkers, and beggars, who so little expected ever to be invited, who, according to all human calculations were quite un-invitable and unpresentable at court, how did they rejoice to be bidden to the marriage?

The Gospel which is despised by the proud is sweet to those who are in spiritual destitution. Know, then, that in order to bring in welcome guests to the feast of mercy, the old commission of the prophets

was enlarged in the delivery to the apostles, they were not restrained to the Jews who were bidden, but to every creature, they were sent out into all the world as itinerant commissioners with unlimited power to bid men believe in Jesus. Ministers of Christ, yea, and all Christians are now sent on the same errand, and to all of you is the word of this salvation sent.

Who were to go? "Then saith he unto *his* servants." You see then that those went who had gone before and had been rejected, or even spitefully used, and we gather from this that disappointments in our former labors are not reasons for retirement, but arguments for increased activity, and that the servants whose messages have been refused should, nevertheless, spring forward and say, "Here are we, send us." I hear these neglected messengers pleading after this fashion, "Gracious king, permit us to go again. We stood astonished, and we wept bitterly as we heard the refusal of Thine enemies, but now grant us the joy of conducting others of our fellow subjects into Thy royal halls."

If any among us have hitherto spent our strength for nought, let us beg leave to proclaim the Gospel again, in hope of better success. Those who have had large success are the very last to dream of being excused from further service, they are wedded to the work for ever. I would to God that you who have been unsuccessful may be equally so.

To whom were the messengers to go? Their path lay straight before them. Out of doors was their road and the common thoroughfare their field, they were to bid all that they found. I do not understand these words if they do not mean just this—that we are to tell the Gospel to everybody with whom we meet. "As many as ye shall find bid to the marriage," that is, everybody you see, pass, live with, deal with, know or hear of, everybody that providence and effort will enable you to reach.

Perhaps one of the servants as he went out ran against his own brother. "Brother," said he, "I pray you haste to the prince's wedding! There is a lack of guests and you will be welcome." Perhaps he went a little farther and met with his sister, or his mother, or his father, and at once he cried, "Come, dear one! come to the wedding, the king has bidden me invite all I meet with, and I have met you, come at once."

Then as he went farther out, he saw a beggar in his rags, limping on crutches. He knew him to be a strange character, and not at all in his face, or his limbs, or his garments, fitted to adorn a royal feast, but he said to him, "There is a great feast ready and it is open to you. The king told me to bid all I found." "Shouldn't I like it!" said the beggar, "but may I go?" "Yes, beyond all doubt, for he who bade me invite all will not refuse any who come."

The messenger ran on and joined himself to a chariot, in which there rode a great nobleman, having invited his lordship, he hastened on to call a thief, and a woman that was a sinner, nor did he pause until the time was come to return to him that sent him. Those servants, I should imagine, had an odd experience of many singular characters, outcasts, eccentrics, and good-for-nothings, but they did as they were told, and it was a great pleasure to them to do so.

The singular benevolence of their errand gave it a great charm. They gathered before long a motley group, bad and good, rich and poor, high and low, lame, blind, sick, and sorry. It was Noah's ark over again, for clean and unclean were fetched in, and there were guests enough, though there was quite room for all. They had no fear of calling too many or of inviting the wrong people, their commission from their Master gave them ample room and verge enough, and they were not slow in carrying it out to the letter. O for grace to follow their blessed example! Let all believers try to do so.

It is not ours alone to instruct those who come to us, but to go after men to press instruction upon them. Granted that in this climate we need the shelter of a roof as a rule, yet let it be accepted as a necessary evil, and never regarded as a religious requirement, much less as a jail wherein the preaching of the Gospel must be confined. Leave church, chapel, tabernacle, meeting house at once, if the masses are not reached by you, and turn out into the public hall, the market, or the field, if there an audience can be secured. The Gospel message is not "Wait within," but "Go ye out!"

What saith that grand old missionary text? "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Out of your pulpit, sir, do not believe in the virtue of that cushion and tassel. Out, I say, into the public places! Nay, it is not I, but your Lord that bids you. Make the Gospel to be known, *in the*

highways, in the public places bid ye as many as ye find. This is the ordained way of furnishing the wedding with guests. The old way of only bidding those to come who have been bidden many times before, has become a failure, henceforth use the generous Gospel way—seek out the strangers, the hitherto unbidden, the un-evangelized, the ignorant, the irreligious, and to them proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Some of us must prophesy in public places to the crowds who need a trumpet voice, and others of us must run along the byways and bid men come, in little groups or one by one. Away there at the street corners, where the idlers lounge whom no man has hired, go ye, and find guests far your Master. Yonder, where a giddy company dance to a defiling song, or where others listen to an idle tale, there bear ye your message of life. Press the good news upon the hungry at the workhouse door, and the felon in his cell, and pass not by the fallen woman, or even her seducer, whose filthy eyes are searching for fresh objects for his lust. Tell the drunkard, when you find him sober, of heaven's wines on the lees well refined, and the beggar, of an alms most rich and free.

All sorts of persons, bad and good, as many as ye find, without exception, ye must bid. Ye need not fear that ye will invite an unwelcome guest, nor that too large a company will come. You will never exhaust your Master's provision or His patience. Go and do as He tells you, and find as many as ye can, for those you bring He will receive.

If there be one whom you in your unbelief would pass over, the probabilities are that he is one whom God decrees to bless, for he seeth not as man seeth, and chooses not after man's preferences. You would forget, perhaps, the poor, but "God has chosen the poor of this world." You might, perhaps, overlook the abject, but "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The discrimination lies with God, and not with you. Who are elect He knows, but ye know not, nor should you wish to know till He reveals them, enough is it for you that He has much people in this city.

Other sheep the Savior has who are not yet of His visible fold, whom also He must bring in. Go ye and be His instruments in the matter. Nay, pause not, wish not to make a difference. God reveals His discriminating grace by a universal indiscriminate preaching of the Gospel. He often works by seeking contraries and achieves His purpose by that which man counts foolishness. He is the best judge of fitness and consistency, it is not yours to judge His methods, but to obey His commands.

Thus we have contemplated the enlargement of the Gospel commission, now let us see—

III. THE COMMISSION FULFILLED.

The servants were commanded to go and they went. O for the like ready obedience on our parts. No servant said, "I am not fit to go," or "I dare not," but it is written, "*So those servants went out.*" Will that be the case in this church? The pastor must lead the way, will you go, ye deacons and elders, one and all? Who among you will be so base as to withhold? Ye members of the church, will ye go? Dare ye refuse the divine call? Sister, will you go? You need not travel far with your feet, your household duties are your highway, speak to those in it tonight.

You, my friend, yonder, are employed in a workroom where many hands are busy, use I pray you your opportunities. Perhaps they find opportunities of ridiculing your religion, make a courageous return by telling them what religion has done for you. Whenever the day of God's power is come His people are made willing for His service.

Before the three thousand were called at Pentecost the disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost. There are two sorts of inquirers, and the one always comes before the other, inquiring saints lead on inquiring sinners, "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." When God's servants go after sinners, sinners come after Christ. That is God's usual rule. "By the foolishness of preaching," which there includes all sorts of Christian teaching, the Lord ordains to save them that believe.

No doubt *every servant went his own way*, for if you observe, the word "highways" is in the plural. If they had all gone together, they would have wasted their strength, but when one went one road and one another, many more would be met with. I think I see them outside the door as they rush out at their

Master's command, one of the elder servants cries, "Brethren, halt a minute! Let us arrange ourselves and agree to scour the city. You run along the north road, and *you* traverse the south, *you* take the east, and I will go the west." No doubt some irregular brother would say, "I cannot be fettered with rules, I shall go where I can." "Very well," they would say, "go, brother, but mind you do not loiter." Probably those would be the better sort who accepted the brotherly agreement, and so carried it out that the whole city was canvassed and the entire district traversed.

See how pleased they all are, how earnest and how swift. How I could wish to have been one of them! Have you such a wish? Well, we can be. We may go at once. It fills my soul with pleasure to think that I am sent to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to poor lost souls. There is no joy like it, except that of seeing them actually saved. These good servants when they found that the king was so surprisingly generous, that since the nobility and aristocracy would not come He intended to bring in the beggars and the highwaymen, and those that slept under the hedges—must have felt such joy in spirit that they leaped along and cried aloud, "Whosoever will, let him come to the royal wedding, for the king has bidden us to call as many as we find, both bad and good."

So all those servants went forth, but though they went different ways they all found guests, for *they gathered together all as many as they found*, and there was enough completely to furnish the chamber with guests. When God sends His servants, they go on no fruitless errand, when He makes them willing to go hither and thither, declaring His mercy, there are sure to be chosen ones in their road. The Lord puts sinners in our way on purpose that we may do them good, and if we are awake to seize all opportunities God will bless our endeavors.

Though the servants went different ways you will observe they all pointed those they found to one central place. They "*gathered together all as many as they found*," they all said as they were bidden, "Come to the wedding," and to each one as he inquired the way, they said, "Behold the feast." Wherever the servants were their fingers pointed to the royal palace.

What a mercy it is when an earnest Christian church has no theme but Christ, when the pastor is set upon bringing sinners to Jesus, and all the brotherhood are filled with the same longing. Happy is it when all the testimonies are one. If you step into the Sunday school the teachers are not preaching up salvation by good works to the little ones, but Jesus only, and if you go into the Bible class, they are not teaching ceremonialism, but cleansing by the precious blood. There are many agents, but they are all working with one design, their spheres vary but not their doctrines, their talents differ but not their messages.

As a result of this agency all kinds of individuals came to the banquet, "*both bad, and good*." In any genuine work of grace, the converts will never be of one class, there will be the rich, glory be to Lord when they are brought, there will be the poor, and the Lord's name be praised for it. We may expect to see the children of godly parents converted, but we may also hope to welcome those who never heard the name of God before.

We have been rejoiced to hear during the last few days of the infidel being converted, it has been: a great joy to mark the tears of a woman that was a sinner, and to hear the cries of those who had been accustomed to the drunkard's settle, while many have come who were aforetime excellent in character, and outwardly religious. When the Gospel is preached to every creature, it gathers together those who in the judgment of men are both bad and good.

But how was it that so many people in the highways when the servants rushed out and told them so hurriedly to come, were found willing to accept the invitation? They had received no previous bidding, yet they came, while those who had timely notice would not come. How strange are the ways of men, how stranger still the ways of God. We have seen it—seen it to our joy and our grief—to our joy that some who never heard the Gospel before have come to Jesus the very first time they have heard about Him—to our grief because those who have known the Gospel from their youth up, have still refused to obey its glorious message. Why was it that they came? They came because *the king who sent the servants, sent a secret power with them*. He had prepared the people in the streets to come.

Our exposition and exhortation shall close with the sweetness word of all. Notwithstanding the first failure, the commission being enlarged and fulfilled, we now see—

IV. THE KING'S DESIGN ACCOMPLISHED—*“The wedding was furnished with guests.”*

It had before everything else but guests, now it has guests also. So, when the Gospel is preached to all nations, the power of God works with it, and His eternal purposes are fulfilled, Jesus sees of the travail of His soul, His union with manhood is graced with a joyful festival.

Observe this, that *the king's bounty was, after all, illustrated*. Those who were first bidden would not come, they did not care to be receivers of his royal bounty, but now he shines in liberality more than if they had come, for everyone tells it—“This king made a feast for beggars, for streetwalkers, for highwaymen, and for all sorts of people.” His name was sounded abroad among the many through his condescending goodness. If moralists refuse the Savior, then when He converts the grossly guilty, He shall have a greater name for grace than ever.

The refusal of Pharisees shall redound to His glory, inasmuch as He invites the publicans. He intended when He killed His oxen and His fatlings that all should be eaten, and He could not have secured this more certainly than by bringing in the famishing poor, for these brought with them ravenous appetites. All the mercy of God is meant to be used, and when He converted such as we are, He chose the right way to have His mercy magnified, for we have been receiving of His fullness grace for grace and are still hungering for more. No part of the banquet of mercy shall go untouched, we need all that is stored in the covenant. There will be enough for us, but we shall have need of all.

The king intended his feast to promote happiness, and *there was ten times more happiness produced by bringing in the poor and needy from the streets, than if the great ones, who were first bidden, had come*. What happiness to the hungry to feed on the bread of heaven! Never had such a meal been set before them in all their lives. They had not even in their dreams thought of sitting at an imperial table. How they looked at each other as they enjoyed the fat things full of marrow! How one smiled on the other and said, “What a feast is this for a hungry soul! I was never filled like this before!”

And oh, since God has brought in some of us, such great sinners, I am sure there are none so happy as we are. None can rejoice so much in pardoning love, and adopting grace, and all the riches of the covenant. Instead of the Lord being defeated in His design of making men happy, He has won a glorious victory through the refusal of His enemies. The Jews refused, but the Gentiles glorify Him more. The regular religionists reject Christ, but the sinners accept Him and are glad.

He intended also that His son should have honor, and surely, if He desired shouts of praise for His son, He found the right men to do it heartily and lustily. If the very respectable people had come, they would have taken everything very quietly after a mild lukewarm fashion, but the rough men of the streets were all enthusiasm and fervor, and when they had weal eaten, how they shouted for joy! What cheers they gave for the king and for His son. Even thus, when grace brings in the outcasts, they feel that none shall sing more loudly in heaven than they, none shall love more or praise more. How rapturously ought we to praise the Lord, that passing by the great and noble He has chosen the base things of this world, and the things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are!

If the king desired love for his son, he went the sure way to accomplish it when he raked the highways for guests, for they would be sure to love the condescending prince now that they had feasted with him. They would prize so much that day's festival that they would henceforth look at themselves as the prince's own, and be his loyal subjects, His devout admirers forever.

They would reverently and joyfully say, what a king is ours! What a royal word it was to say, “Go into the highways and bring in as many as you find!” O how they would love him! If He destroyed a seditious city, he made up for the loss by creating a new band of loyal citizens. Here were men who would serve him with their lives or die for him in his battles. Such heart has Jesus won. Now that we have been brought to receive salvation, we would live for Jesus, we would die for him—

“All that I am, and all I have,

Shall be for ever thine.”

Thou who hast done so much for me, help me to do all I can for Thee. God bless every such a lover of the Prince Immanuel.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.